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INTRODUCTION

The Legacy of Ueda Shizuteru: A Zen Life of Dialogue in a Twofold World

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Ueda Shizuteru 上田閑照 (1926–2019) led a double life. And he taught us how we, too, can lead double lives. Or rather, he explained how we are already in fact doing so. It's just that we don't realize this. We are not awakened to, and thus do not fully actualize the fact that we always dwell, more or less, both within and beyond the linguistically constructed worlds of meaning that we co-create and that in turn co-create us. The more we become aware of this fact, the more capable we'll become of creatively exiting and reentering these semantic spaces, and thus of living the kind of double life of dialogue that Ueda so well modeled in practice as well as mapped out in theory.

Throughout his life, Ueda was devoted to engaging, primarily from the standpoint of Zen Buddhism, in interreligious as well as intercultural philosophical dialogue. In a retrospective essay written in 2004, Ueda wrote that his life and work took place within two kinds of "between spaces" (*aida* 間). He moved between "religious existence" (*shūkyō-teki jitsuzon* 宗教的実存) and "philosophical thinking" (*tetsugaku-teki shisaku* 哲学的思索). And, for him, this entailed going between engaging with the spiritual traditions of East-Asia—the practice of Zen Buddhism in particular—and studying European traditions of philosophy and religion (Ueda 2005a, 18).

No doubt Ueda was drawn to study Meister Eckhart—that unmatched medieval *Meister* of both life and letters—because he recognized a kindred attempt to live and think in between acute existential and intellectual demands. Sensing a similar combination of sincere spiritual practice and passionate scholarly thinking is probably also

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what implicitly drew Ueda to study under Nishitani Keiji (1900–1990), and it is explicitly what drew him, later in his career, to write extensively about the life as well as thought of Nishitani's teacher, Nishida Kitarō (1870–1945), the progenitor of the Kyoto School.[1] Ueda himself was destined to become one of the most important figures in modern Japanese and intercultural philosophy, as well as in the modern history of Zen itself.

Ueda was the central figure of the third generation of the Kyoto School, and he served as the unofficial School's unofficial dean for three decades following Nishitani's death in 1990. Not only was Ueda a scholar of both Meister Eckhart and Zen who played a pivotal role in interreligious dialogue, and not only was he an original philosopher in his own right, he was also a lifelong Zen practitioner who in fact—even though he deferentially declined to parade about his Zen credentials—received the "seal of certification" (*inka shōmei* 印可証明) as a Rinzai Zen master from Kajitani Sōnin Rōshi (1914–1995), a former abbot of Shōkokuji monastery.[2]

Ueda's life

Ueda was raised as the son of a Shingon Buddhist priest and scholar, and his familiarity with this esoteric school of Japanese Buddhism can occasionally be witnessed in his works (see especially an essay on "Place and Mandala" in Ueda 2001–2003, 9:295–322). Yet, Ueda decided not to follow in his father's footsteps, taking instead the academic path of studying philosophy and religion and the embodied-spiritual path of practicing Zen. In 1945, just prior to the end of the war and at the age of nineteen, Ueda entered Kyoto University. Graduating in 1949, he spent the next decade in graduate school at Kyoto University, continuing his studies of philosophy and religion before going to Germany to study at Marburg University, where he received his first PhD in 1963 with a dissertation on Meister Eckhart. As was until recently customary in Japan, he received his PhD from Kyoto University later in his career, in 1976, with a dissertation on the topic "Studies in Mysticism East and West."

Ueda initially studied modern German philosophy; his undergraduate thesis was on Kant. In graduate school, he first focused his studies on Hegel before increasingly turning his attention to phenomenologists and existential philosophers such as Heidegger and Jaspers. At the same time, as a student Ueda also attended seminars on Buddhist philosophy (he mentions Madhyamaka in particular), and even engrossed himself in learning Sanskrit and Tibetan for three years. He abruptly halted his study of these Buddhist languages around the time he began focusing his attention on Meister Eckhart, which required him to learn Middle High German as well as Latin (Ueda 2005b, 21–22).

The teacher who had the most impact on Ueda was clearly Nishitani. In 1949, Ueda attended the lectures that became the basis for Nishitani's book *Nihirizumu* (Nihilism; now available in Nishitani 1986–1995, vol. 8), translated into English as *The Self-Overcoming of Nihilism* (Nishitani 1990b). Ueda was also strongly influenced by Nishitani's first book, *Kongen-teki shutaisei no tetsugaku* (The Philosophy of Radical Subjectivity; first published in 1940; now available in Nishitani 1986–1995, vol.1), and by a book

[1]On the Kyoto School and Ueda's place therein, see Ōhashi and Akitomi 2020; Davis 2019a; Davis 2022, chap. 21.

[2]This was verified in a conversation I had with the current abbot of Shōkokuji monastery, Kobayashi Gentoku Rōshi, who told me he had personally seen Ueda's seal of certification. It should be stressed how extremely rare it is in Rinzai Zen, especially for a lay practitioner, to receive this ultimate official recognition of enlightenment.

on German mysticism by Nishitani that focused on Meister Eckhart, *Kami to zettai mu* (God and Absolute Nothingness; first published in 1948; now available in Nishitani 1986–1995, vol. 7) (Ueda 2005a, 4).

While in graduate school, around the same time as his interest in Eckhart was developing, it was also under Nishitani's influence that Ueda began to practice Zen. Ueda first became intrigued by Zen at the age of twenty-five upon reading a book on one hundred Zen topics by D. T. Suzuki (Suzuki 1991 first edition 1951). Ueda always maintained a deep respect for Suzuki, even though he was only able to meet him in person one time, namely when he interviewed Suzuki in 1965 about the Zen classic, *The Record of Linji* (Ueda 2001–2003, 4:369–370; Suzuki and Ueda 1973). Ueda traces his first encounter with the actual practice of Zen meditation (*zazen* 坐禅) back to an episode that took place on a trip to Mt. Kōya with his teacher Nishitani. At dusk, he went to Nishitani's room, and found that the light was off even though the sliding paper door was open. The darkness of the room, he recalls, seemed to stretch out infinitely and transparently, without any obstructions. For a moment, Ueda recalls, "my entire self was opened up, without any sound or movement, by the openness of that transparent darkness." Then, Nishitani, who had in fact been sitting still in meditation, casually stood up and turned on the light. An everyday occurrence for Nishitani, who, according to Ueda, most likely would not have remembered this event at all, the experience left a lasting impact on Ueda, eventually inspiring him to formally take up the practice of Zen as a member of Chishōkai, the lay practitioner group at Shōkokuji to which Nishitani belonged (Ueda 2001–2003, 4:371–372).

Since Ueda recalls joining Chishōkai was when he was "nearing the end of my twenties," this was probably around 1954 (Ueda 2001–2003, 4:347–348, 372–373). That means that he had been formally practicing Zen—both meditation (*zazen*) and kōan training (*sanzen* 参禅) with Ōtsu Rekidō Rōshi (1897–1976)—already for about five years before going to Germany to study Meister Eckhart in 1959, at the age of thirty-three. Even though he did not initially set out to relate them to one another, Ueda acknowledges that his familiarity with Zen unintentionally yet unmistakably influenced his interpretation of Eckhart (Ueda 2005a, 8; Ueda 2005b, 23–24).

After spending three years, from 1959 to 1962, at Marburg University in Germany working on his first PhD, Ueda returned to Japan and in 1964 accepted a position as an assistant professor of German language and literature at Kyoto University. In 1967, he became an assistant professor of "pedagogical anthropology" in Kyoto University's School of Education, and was promoted to full professor in 1972. In 1977, he was appointed professor of religious studies in the School of Letters at Kyoto University. He retired from Kyoto University in 1989, and then from 1991 to 1999 taught as a guest professor at the Rinzai Zen affiliated Hanazono University in Kyoto.

In addition to returning to lecture in Germany often, including as a guest professor at Marburg University in 1970–1971, Ueda also frequently traveled to Switzerland to participant in the Eranos Conferences between 1976 and 1993, and in meetings of the Zürcher Gespräche between 1977 and 2004. In 2003, Ueda was selected to be a member of the prestigious *Nihon-gakushi-in* (The Japan Academy), and in 2018 he was designated a *Bunka kōrō-sha* (a culturally meritorious person) by the Japanese government.[3].

[3]Most of the information given here on Ueda's career is based on a CV that he provided me with in 2009.

For more than a half-century, Ueda was married to Ueda Maniko (1930–2017). Having lived and studied together in Germany, she became a renowned translator of German and author in her own right. She was a strong and supportive presence in his life, and the warmth of their intimate esteem for one another always left an impression on me when I visited their home in Hieidaira. I admit that it was also entertaining for me to witness someone who could affectionately tease the renowned yet occasionally absent-minded Ueda Sensei!

Ueda passed away on June 28, 2019, at the age of 93. On August 25 of that year, a well-attended memorial ceremony was held at Kyoto University, with a slide show and speeches delivered by some of his closest students, associates, and relatives. The speeches along with pictures, obituaries, and other materials were compiled afterward into a beautifully crafted commemorative booklet. I will say a few words about my own final meeting with Ueda Sensei toward the end of this introductory essay.

Ueda's works

In 2001, at the age of seventy-five, Ueda began publishing a thematically arranged collected edition of his writings. By the end of 2003, the eleven volumes of *Ueda Shizuteru shū* (The Ueda Shizuteru Collection) were in print (Ueda 2001–2003). For each volume Ueda composed an afterword (often drawing on previously published postscripts), reflecting on his engagement with the topic of that volume. As James Heisig points out in a review article on the collected works, Ueda organized their content roughly in the following manner: Volumes 1–3 focus on Nishida; volumes 4–6 on Zen; volumes 7–8 on Meister Eckhart; volumes 9–10 on Ueda's own philosophy of the twofold world and phenomenology of the self; and volume 11 on religion. Yet, as Heisig notes, these topics are much more interwoven in Ueda's writings than this neat division would imply (Heisig 2005, 257).[4]

[4]Heisig laments that the collected works make the chronological development of Ueda's thought difficult to trace, since Ueda arranged the material thematically and sometimes freely revised pieces as he fit them together. Perhaps someday a scholar will produce a critical and chronologically arranged edition. In any case, while some of Ueda's ideas undoubtedly underwent development and revision, I have always been struck by how consistent his thought remained over the years. It did not undergo any major changes or "turns," nor did his philosophy itself become directly embroiled in political misadventures, as did that of Nishida and Heidegger—although Ueda did weigh in on the controversy surrounding Nishida's political writings (Ueda 1994a). For these reasons, and also because Ueda provides ample sources of intellectual autobiography in the afterwords to the eleven volumes and elsewhere, I don't find an *aus letzter Hand* rather than a critical-chronological edition to be very problematic in his case. And, of course, there are many merits

The Japan Society for Buddhist-Christian Studies held a conference in Kyoto on Ueda's thought in July of 2004, for which Ueda composed four retrospective essays that together sketch his intellectual autobiography and the contours of his thought. Those four essays, which were published in the Society's journal the following year, provide overviews of his path of thought (Ueda 2005a) and his writings on Zen and Meister Eckhart (Ueda 2005b), on Nishida's philosophy (Ueda 2005c), and on religion (Ueda 2005d).

In 2007–2008, Ueda published a smaller selection of his works in an affordable five-volume paperback edition titled *Tetsugaku korekushon* (Philosophical Collection). The topics of those five volumes are as follows: religion; experience and place; language; the non-mysticism of Zen and Meister Eckhart; and the itinerary and landscapes of Ueda's path of thought. After publishing an additional collection of essays in 2010 (Ueda 2010), in 2011 Ueda published a selection of his articles written in German over the years under the title *Wer und was bin ich? Zur Phänomenologie des Selbst im Zen-Buddhismus* (Ueda 2011a).[5] The present special issue of *Comparative and Continental Philosophy* concludes with a review essay on this exemplary anthology.

In one of the retrospective essays he composed in 2004, Ueda confirms that the three thematic foci that tie together his many decades of research and writing are Meister Eckhart, Zen Buddhism, and Nishida Kitarō (Ueda 2005a, 4). Chronologically speaking, he began his scholarly career with a dissertation on Eckhart, written in German for the doctoral degree he received from Marburg University in 1963. When he revised his German dissertation for publication in 1965, he was encouraged by his advisor Ernst Benz to add a final chapter comparing Eckhart with Zen (Ueda 2018, 183–212). This remarkable "appended chapter" proved to be programmatic; for comparing and contrasting Zen and Eckhart became a staple of his life's work (Ueda 2005a, 8). It appears for the first time in English translation in this special issue.

Ueda came to understand Eckhart and especially Zen in terms of what he calls "non-mysticism" (*hi-shinpi-shugi* 非神秘主義, *Nicht-Mystik*) (Ueda 2001–2003, vol. 8; Ueda 2007–2008, vol. 4). In a conversation at his home in 2002, Ueda graciously agreed with my suggestion that what he refers to as "non-mysticism" might be better called "de-mysticism" or "trans-mysticism" (see Davis 2008; Davis 2022, 181–185), since what he means is not a straightforward negation of mysticism but rather a path that leads through a radical *unio mystica* "back" to an even more "radical everydayness" (*byōjōtei* 平常底), to borrow a phrase from Nishida. (Nishida himself had gleaned this phrase from a famous saying by the ninth century Chinese Zen master Zhaozhou: "Everyday Even Mind is the Way" [Ch. *píngchángxīn shì dào*; Jp. *byōjōshin kore michi* 平常心是道].) Indeed, in his retrospective essay on this topic in 2004, Ueda stresses that what he means by non-mysticism requires mysticism as a platform or springboard: "as is indicated by the word 'non-mysticism,' it is because there is mysticism as a foundation that the kind of dynamism of non-mysticism can occur as a transcending

to the fact that we have access to the author's own final understanding and presentation of the interconnected whole of his life's work.

[5]Heisig 2005 contains a bibliography of Ueda's works available in Western languages, including the twenty-seven essays that Ueda composed in German, as well as the many essays of his that by that time (2005) had been translated into other Western languages. Notably, twelve translations of Ueda's articles into English can be found in issues of *The Eastern Buddhist* between 1971 and 1996, and a few in later issues of that journal as well (including Ueda 2016).

departure from that foundation" (Ueda 2005b, 26). Without that foundation of mysticism, he adds, non-mysticism loses its aura of spirituality (*reisei* 霊性) or "spiritual energy" (*reiki* 霊気), and might be mistaken then for a mere non- or anti-religious rationalism (Ueda 2005b, 27–28).

Although he did not set out to compare Eckhart and Zen or to articulate a Zen-inspired interpretation of Eckhart, in retrospect, he acknowledges, his familiarity with Zen allowed him to understand the dynamism and depth of Eckhart's most radical teachings—such as his call to "discard God," which appears shockingly heretical in a Western theological context, but not unusual in a Zen context (Ueda 2005b, 23–24). One could say that it was in Germany that Ueda began to fully realize the effects on his thought of his own Zen background. It was also there that he began to move this background into the foreground. I recall him telling me that it was in Germany that he first found himself being asked to explain Zen, and, moreover, to explain it to an audience unfamiliar with the deep and wide tradition that informs it and is informed by it.

It was precisely in such a cross-context that Ueda began to lecture on *The Ten Oxherding Pictures*, namely during his second lengthy stay in Germany as a guest professor at Marburg University in 1970–1971 (see Ueda 2001–2003, 6:351–354). This famous text consists of a set of brush paintings and poems by the twelfth-century Chinese Zen master Kuoan and pithy commentary by his successor Ziyuan, and it has long been treasured especially in the Japanese Rinzai Zen tradition.[6] Ueda would eventually publish two books on this classic text, the first co-authored with the eminent scholar of Zen, Yanagida Seizan (Ueda and Yanagida 1982 (paperback edition 1992)), and the second a monograph written twenty years later (Ueda 2002; Ueda's contributions to the former and the entirety of the latter now appear in volume 6 of Ueda 2001–2003). *The Ten Oxherding Pictures* was among the classical Zen texts on which, for many years, Ueda gave talks to us at monthly meetings of Chishōkai at Shōkokuji. I vividly recall him patiently spending a couple of meetings to discuss each picture and commentary.

The first monograph Ueda wrote in Japanese was on Zen. Titled simply and also boldly *Zen Bukkyō* (Zen Buddhism), and subtitled *Kongen-teki ningen* (Originary Human Being), it was first published in 1973 by Chikuma Shōbō. In 1993, Iwanami Shoten published an expanded paperback edition of this book (Ueda 1993). (Most chapters were later incorporated into volume 4, and one chapter into volume 8 of Ueda 2001–2003). Although he continued to publish on Eckhart and other figures and topics in religion and philosophy, as well as on Japanese and European literature and poetry (often drawing out the philosophical and religious depths of Japanese children's poetry), Ueda never wavered from writing primarily *from* the standpoint of Zen, even when he was not writing explicitly *about* Zen.

This is true of his many works on Nishida, starting with his landmark study published in 1991, *Nishida Kitarō wo yomu* (Reading Nishida Kitarō) (Ueda 1991). More than

[6]The most famous rendition of the pictures, and the one favored by Ueda, is by the fifteenth-century Japanese artist Tenshō Shūbun, who was a monk at Shōkokuji, where these pictures are still housed. Ueda was first introduced to *The Ten Oxherding Pictures* by his first teacher at Shōkokuji, Ōtsu Rekidō Rōshi, and it was in fact a German translation of this modern Zen master's lectures on this text that Ueda used when teaching in Marburg (Tsujimura and Buchner 1958), even though Ueda says that he focused the discussion with his German seminar participants on the pictures themselves rather than the words of any traditional or modern commentary. The best available English translation can be found in Yamada 2004. For my own interpretation, which draws on many of Ueda's insights, see Davis 2022, chap. 24.

anyone else, Ueda is responsible for the revival of Nishida studies in Japan, a field that continues to thrive today, and not only in Japan. It was no surprise to anyone that, in 2003, Ueda was unanimously elected to be the first president of *Nishida tetsugakkai* (The Nishida Philosophy Association). The importance of his work on Nishida's life and thought to Ueda himself is reflected in the fact that he placed most of this work in the first three volumes of his collected works (Ueda 2001–2003, vols. 1, 2, and 3), and also in the fact that he devoted one of his four retrospective essays written in 2004 to his engagement with Nishida's philosophy.

In that 2004 essay, Ueda begins with a reference to two declarations by Nishida's lifelong friend D. T. Suzuki, who devoted much of his life to introducing Zen to a Western audience. Nishida was fond of recalling an episode when, in a conversation with Nishida and Nishitani, Suzuki said "This is what Zen is . . ." and vigorously shook the table, abruptly bringing their attention back from the abstractions of thought to the concrete reality of the here and now. Ueda takes this *gata-gata* (ガタガタ; an onomatopoeia for a rattling sound) event as an example of what Nishida called "pure experience" (*junsuikeiken* 純粋経験). And yet, that is only half the story of what Suzuki had to say (or show) about Zen. The other half was his insistence that, as he stressed in a letter to Hisamatsu Shin'ichi in 1954, "out in the world, Zen must take on the character of thought" (Ueda 2005c, 61; see also Ueda 2005b, 24; Ueda 2001–2003, 4:2–3 and 5:114). It was Suzuki's expressed hope that Nishida would provide Zen with a philosophy and even a "logic" (Jaffe 2015, xv; Davis 2022, 278).

According to Ueda, Nishida's lifelong project was to develop a philosophy that would remain true to the immediately experiential and even "contradictory" facts of concrete reality, rather than impose fabricated ideas or the framework of an abstract logic on that reality. With an abiding "respect for the facticity of factual reality (*jijitsu no jijitsusei no sonchō* 事実の事実性の尊重)," Ueda says that Nishida's path of thought was always "guided by a twofold concern, namely a direct concern for true reality and a theoretical concern for comprehensive explanation" (Ueda 2005c, 72). While Ueda's own philosophical concerns were less thematically comprehensive, they were no less rigorously twofold—that is to say, no less intensely concerned both with directly experiencing and with conceptually clarifying the nature of our human existence and place in the (twofold) world.

Ueda's philosophy

In the final decades of his life, Ueda articulated, with increasing confidence and clarity, his own original philosophy—albeit a philosophy consistently rooted in Zen practice and thought and avowedly influenced by the philosophies of Nishida and Nishitani.[7] In addition to rethinking Nishida's "place of absolute nothingness" (*zettai mu no basho* 絶対無の場所) and Nishitani's "field of emptiness" (*kū no ba* 空の場) in his own manner using a traditional Mahayana Buddhist term, signifying "empty expanse" or "hollow emptiness" (*kokū* 虚空),[8] the three phrases that crystalize Ueda's philosophy are "being-in-the-twofold-world" (*nijū sekai nai sonzai* 二重世界内存在),[9] "I, in not

[7] I attempt to give a fuller introduction to the contours of Ueda's thought in Davis forthcoming.

being I, am I" (*Ware wa, ware narazu shite, ware nari* 我は、我ならずして、我なり), and "exiting language and exiting into language" (*kotoba kara dete, kotoba ni deru* 言葉から出て、言葉に出る).

What Ueda calls "being-in-the-twofold-world" (more literally: "being-in-the-two-layered-world") draws on Nishida's philosophy of "place" (*basho* 場所) as much as it does on Heidegger's phenomenology of "being-in-the-world" (*In-der-Welt-sein*) (see Ueda 2001–2003, vols. 3 and 9; Ueda 2019; Döll 2011 and 2020; and John Krummel's essay in this issue). Ueda's central insight in this regard is that human beings are always situated within a linguistically mediated world—within, that is, the horizons of a delimited "space of meaning" (*imi-kūkan* 意味空間)—which is in turn situated within an all-encompassing undelimited space, an inherently invisible "empty expanse" or "hollow emptiness."

At the same time as he was concerned with the twofold place in which the self dwells, Ueda was equally concerned with the true nature of this self, that is to say, with what Nishida called "the true individual" (*shin no ko* 真の個, or *shin no kobutsu* 真の個物) and Nishitani called "radical subjectivity" (*kongen-teki shutaisei* 根源的主体性) and "the self that is not a self" (*jiko narazaru jiko* 自己ならざる自己). For Ueda, this is the self that can affirm itself only by way of negating itself—by way, that is, of breaking out of its tendency toward egoistic solipsism and opening itself up to its essentially and ex-sistentially dialogical relation with others. In short, says Ueda, the truly self-aware self is not the self-certain Cartesian *ego cogito* who directly affirms its being in monologically saying to itself, "I am I," but rather the coexistent self who affirms its being only by way of a self-negating self-opening. The true self is thus not a static and isolated substance, but rather a participant in a dynamic and dialogical process. It is the self that can say, "I, in not being I, am I."[10] In the moment of radical self-negation in this process, the self is not only opened up to the interpersonal other and to other non-personal beings; it also become freely aware of its ultimate abode in the infinite openness of the empty expanse. Only by way of regularly passing through such a self-negation can we creatively and compassionately re-inhabit our being-with others in this or that world of shared meaning.

In terms of language, this entails a process of "exiting language and exiting into language" (Ueda 2011b, 769; Ueda 2007–2008, vol. 3). Ueda agrees with Heidegger that "language is the house of being," in the sense that language domesticates reality; it allows human life to be a meaningful being-in-the-world. And yet, a house is not a home, Ueda adds, unless one is free to leave and return to it. Otherwise it is a birdcage or a prison house (Ueda 2001–2003, 4:387). According to Ueda, Zen practice, and

[8]Ueda also speaks of this as an "infinite open" (*mugen no hirake* 無限の開け) or "limitless open" (*kagiri-nai hirake* 限りない開け) (Ueda 2001–2003, 9:21 and 11:11). Note that the term *hirake* is used to translate Heidegger's term *das Offene*, yet Ueda stresses the difference between the horizonally delimited open of a finite "world" and the infinite open in which such finite worlds are situated. In German, Ueda speaks of this empty expanse or infinite open as *die unendliche Offenheit* (the infinite openness), *die unendliche Weite* (the infinite expanse), and *die umfassende unbegrenzte Erschlossenheit* (the encompassing undelimited disclosedness) (Ueda 2011a, 72–79, 165–170, 190–191, 194–196, 201).

[9]A more literal translation would be "being-in-the-two-layered-world." In German, Ueda writes "In-der-Doppelwelt-Wohnen" (dwelling-in-the-double-world) (Ueda 2011a, 72).

[10]*Ware wa, ware narazu shite, ware nari* 我は、我ならずして、我なり (Ueda 2010, 34). Using a more conversational term for "I," Ueda also writes this phrase as *Watashi wa, watashi narazu shite, watashi dearu* 私は、私ならずして、私である (Ueda 2001–2003, 10:23–24). In German, Ueda writes "Ich bin, indem ich nicht ich bin, ich" (Ueda 2011a, 199; see also Ueda 2011a, 14, 108, 214).

especially the Rinzai Zen practice of going back and forth between long periods of silent meditation and intense one-on-one interviews, slows down and intensifies this movement between exiting and reentering language (Ueda 1994b, 18, 28; Ueda 2001–2003, 4:210; see also Davis 2019b, 716–717; Döll 2020, 273–274).

The encounter dialogues (*mondō* 問答) that make up many of the kōans that Rinzai Zen practitioners meditate on and demonstrate their understanding of in one-on-one interviews with a teacher, and those one-on-one interviews themselves, are for Ueda not just a matter of a peculiar practice of a particular school of Zen; they are paradigmatic presentations of the central role that dialogue plays in being human. Indeed, Ueda goes so far as to claim that "dialogue is human existence as such" (Ueda 2001–2003, 4:273). I attempt to elucidate and elaborate on this central topic in Ueda's thought in my article in this special issue, and John Maraldo critically investigates it further in his contribution.

Religion and interreligious dialogue

In the preface to his first book, *Zen no kenkyū* (An Inquiry into the Good, 1911), Nishida tells us that he "thinks of religion as the consummation of philosophy" (Nishida 1987–1989, 1:3; Nishida 1990a, xxx). Fittingly, not only does that maiden work culminate with a section on the philosophy of religion, but also the last essay he completed before his death in 1945 was "The Logic of Place and the Religious Worldview" (Nishida 1987–1989, 11:371–464; Nishida 1987).

What is Religion? (*Shūkyō to wa nanika* 宗教とは何か)—this is not only a literal translation of the title of Nishitani's magnum opus (Nishitani 1986–1995, vol. 10[11]); it is also the title Ueda gave to the last volume of his own collected works (Ueda 2001–2003, vol. 11). Ueda titled the first volume of his selected works simply "Religion" (Ueda 2007–2008, vol. 1). He titled the fourth and final of his 2004 retrospective essays, "What Is Religion?" (Ueda 2005d), and in the first of those essays he professes that this had all along been the guiding existential as well as philosophical question of his life and work (Ueda 2005a, 4).

For Ueda, the question "What is religion?" and the question "What is human being?" are basically synonymous (Ueda 2005d, 99). This is because, according to him, "religion" is a name for our various human attempts to expressly enable the full dynamic of our being-in-the-twofold-world. In the opening essay of the final volume of his collected works—an essay also titled simply "What Is Religion?"—Ueda writes:

> The world of the human subject as being-in-the-world is finite; and, precisely in that finitude, it is transcended and encompassed by infinity. In other words, that [finite] world is a world insofar as it is "within" an infinite openness. Religion is a matter of the human subject becoming self-aware of this true nature of reality. (Ueda 2001–2003, 11:27)[12]

[11]With Nishitani's permission, Jan Van Bragt published his English translation of this work under the title, *Religion and Nothingness* (Nishitani 1982).

[12]In the opening section of this essay, Ueda writes about three Japanese words that can all be translated as "life"—*seimei* 生命, *sei* 生, and *inochi* いのち. Whereas the first term refers to biological life, the second refers to our historical, social, and individual lives. The last term is the hardest to grasp as well as to translate; it refers to a sense of life that resists reduction to an object of study by either the natural or social sciences, or even by philosophical existentialism. And yet, it is the most basic and most important. It is the originary sense of life indicated at the expressive limits of poetry, art, and religious writing and ritual. *Inochi*, according to Ueda, indicates the ultimate sense of life that one becomes aware of when faced with biological demise or with existential ego-death. Indeed, it is a sense of life that can be discovered in

Ueda goes on to distinguish between the different manners in which various religious traditions thematize and concretize—make vocal and visible—revelatory experiences and poetic senses of the "other dimension" of the invisibly infinite openness which silently transcends-and-encompasses (*koetsutsumu* 超え包む) our perceptually, linguistically, and conceptually articulated worlds. Broadly speaking, he writes, there are religions that are based on revelatory breakthrough experiences of this infinitude as coming "from above" (*ue kara* 上から), and those that are based on such breakthrough experiences as coming "from below" (*shita kara* 下から). The former type of breakthrough experience tends to be spoken of as an encounter with a personal and volitional God (for example, Yahweh or Allah) or Buddha (for example, Amida), an encounter that often elicits a response in the form of linguistic practices of prayer. By contrast, the latter type of breakthrough experience tends to be spoken of in terms of silently "sinking down into" an impersonal all-encompassing "place," often enabled by engaging in practices of meditation (for example, *zazen*) (Ueda 2001–2003, 11:28–34).

In any case, what is most important for interreligious dialogue, according to Ueda, is not distinguishing between specific doctrines, nor even discerning whether a religion understands God or Buddha as a transcendent person or as an encompassing place. What is most important is neither neutral comparisons nor mere mutual tolerance, but rather for practitioners of different religions, while remaining committed to their own religious pathways, to learn to see and to experience other pathways as "sibling religions," as complementary rather than contradictory concretizations or incarnations of what Ueda refers to as the "ur-religion" (*genshūkyō* 原宗教) that could never be exhaustively expressed by any one of them or even by all of them put together (Ueda 2001–2003, 11:391–393; see also Ueda 2001–2003, 4:389; Ueda 2005d, 103–104).

It is for this reason that Ueda suggests that any genuine dialogue must involve what I call, in my essay in this special issue, a diasigetic passage (from the Greek, διά [*dia*] = across or between, and σιγάω [*sigaō*] = to keep silent): a mutual passing through silence (see Ueda 2001–2003, 10:296). Indeed, it could be said that such a diasigetic passage necessarily accompanies any genuine dialogue—interpersonal, intercultural, or interreligious—and that ultimately this involves a shared and holistic diapraxis. This is something that the Zen tradition in particular has emphasized (see Ueda 2001–2003, 4:210; Ueda 2011a, 145–164; Davis 2019b).

Ueda speaks in this regard of an experience he had at a conference on Buddhist-Christian dialogue held in a Benedictine monastery in Germany. Every morning, before the *dialogue* started, they would engage in what I am calling *diapraxis*. On alternating days, they would engage in either the ritual of a Catholic mass or the silent practice of Zen meditation. In particular, the experience of "sharing silence" (*chinmoku wo tomo ni suru* 沈黙を共にする) by doing *zazen* together in this interreligious context left a deep impression on Ueda. Whereas a straightforward "interreligious dialogue" can

the experience of a liberating death and enlivening rebirth in each and every out-breath and in-breath that I take—or, rather, in an ecstatic experience of breathing that takes *my* breath away, an experience of breathing that takes me out of the shell of my anxious ego into a more expansive and inclusive process of life-and-death. The word *inochi* intimates a non-egocentric source of life that opens us up to the infinite expanse in which all our delimited worlds of meaning—the worlds, that is, in which our tangibly finite biological, historical, sociological, and individually existential lives are vocally and visibly situated—are in turn tacitly and imperceptively situated. It indicates a sense of life that is infinitely larger and more enlivening than—and that is the very source of—both our biological bodies and psychological minds. (Here I am elucidating and elaborating on Ueda 2001–2003, 11:7–18; see also Ueda 2016).

mislead participants into thinking that they must either insist on or weaken their commitments to their specific creeds, such a meditative sharing of silence may open the door to a third way, a way in which practitioners can find an opening to an appreciation of other religious paths by passing through the ineffable depths of their own (Ueda 2001–2003, 5:166–181).

What is most important in interreligious dialogues and diasigetics, according to Ueda, is that all religious individuals and groups recognize that all religious doctrines and rituals are concretizations or incarnations into visible and linguistic forms of that which is inherently invisible and ineffable. This concretization is inevitable and indeed necessary, but is also the source of religious distortions, such as exclusionary forms of fundamentalism that conflate their visible forms with the invisibly formless transcendently-encompassing dimension, which those visible forms were originally meant to reveal. Because that revealing is always, inevitably, also at the same time a concealing, religions are always in danger of distorting, rather than enabling, the dynamic of true human existence as being-in-the-twofold-world; and these distortions can lead, and have led to, some of the most violent and destructive acts perpetrated by humankind (Ueda 2001–2003, 11:35–36; Ueda 2005d, 103–104). The collapse of the twofold world into a egocentric or ethnocentric monolithic and monological onefold world is the great danger that faces human beings, especially in an age in which violent fundamentalisms increasingly vie, no longer just with true religion, but moreover and more often with a globalizing materialistic world in which secular capitalists and consumers no longer engage in, or even see any need for, genuinely intercultural and interreligious dialogue (Ueda 2001–2003, 11:387–88; Ueda 2007–2008, 1:73; Ueda 2011c).

Ueda worries that we have all but lost a sense of our being-in-the-twofold-world today, when it seems obvious that the world is only onefold to secularists, and when the twofold world has been reified and thus distorted into the dogma of a two-world view by religionists. In a world in which it seems that we have to choose between either the meaningless immanence of scientism or the dogmatically defined transcendence of fundamentalism, are there still ears capable of hearing what Nishida referred to as "immanent transcendence" (*naizai-teki chōetsu* 内在的超越), a religious orientation that he thought Mahayana Buddhism may be able to remind the world of (Nishida 1987–1989, 11:434, 461–463; Nishida 1987, 99, 120–121)? Or for what Ueda speaks of as the dynamic of being-in-the-twofold-world, a dynamic of exiting and reentering our finite language-worlds that depends on repeatedly recovering a sense of the infinite expanse that transcends-and-encompasses them?

It is precisely because we live in an age in which the questions "What is religion?" and even "What is human being?" are no longer experienced by many as profoundly existential matters of life and death that such basic philosophical and religious inquiry is, in fact, more urgent than ever. In academia as well in the marketplace, such questions are often reduced to matters of information to be catalogued, operationalized, instrumentalized, and monetized. We scientists and scholars, who think we already know the answers, or at least the framework within which and the terms with which to carry out our research, build our knowledge base and data bases, and apply our know-how, have not yet even become truly self-aware of the depth and difficulty of the most basic question of human existence: What does it mean to live and to die as a human being? According to Ueda, this means—in one way or another: avowedly religious or dismissively secular,

prayerfully pious or silently meditative, mystically absorbed or trans-mystically engaged, violently exclusive or dialogically open—to live and to die as a *homo religiosus*.

Final words and silence

The last time I visited Ueda Sensei was in the hospital two weeks before he passed away.[13] When I was about to leave, and it was clear that this would be the last time that we would meet, he mustered his strength, propped himself up, leaned over toward me, and beckoned me to come closer. He could barely speak. And yet, despite his frailty and breathlessness, I was nearly taken aback by the force with which he uttered just two words. Pointing downward, he said "Here!" (*koko* 此処). Then, pointing to his eyes, he said "Eyes!" (*me* 目). A few moments later, as I was about to leave the hospital room, we both put our hands together in *gasshō* and bowed deeply in silence. When I rose up out of this deep bow into deep silence, I again found his eyes locked on mine, yet no longer accompanied by any words. This was his final, tacit teaching.

Here is how I have digested the wisdom intimated that day: Keep your eyes on the here and now. The past is gone and the future has not yet arrived. No matter how far you travel, you cannot be anywhere other than here. And so, reality, if it is to be found anywhere and at any time, must be found here and now. Of course, we need to remember the past and anticipate so as to participate in shaping the future; and we certainly also need to be aware of what's happening in other places. Yet all that has to be grounded in the here and now of each one of us, otherwise we fall into ineffectual escapism, depressive rumination, or anxious despair.

Nevertheless, the ground of the here and now turns out to be itself ungrounded. And happily so, since that is what enables its openness—the openness at the heart of the mind of the true self. The self, along with the world, is twofold. Each one of us is at once a finitely factual self and an infinitely open no-self. This is why we can engage in authentic dialogue, by way of a reciprocal experience of exiting and returning to language. This is why we can bow down into the utterly peaceful silence of the "empty expanse"—and rise back up, reenergized and ready to critically, creatively, and compassionately reinvigorate and revise our intelligible worlds of words.

Ueda Sensei's last two words and intensely silent gaze that day were, for me, the final lesson of his twofold life, an extraordinary life of diapraxis as well as dialogue between East Asian and Western ways of thought and practice.

Scholarship on Ueda's thought

Scholarship on Ueda's thought is still at a nascent stage, even in Japan, where the first anthology on his thought appeared in 2005 as a special issue of *Tōzai shūkyō kenkyū* (Studies of Religion East and West) (Japan Society for Buddhist-Christian Studies 2005). That volume contains Ueda's four retrospective essays, and each one is followed by a response and a transcript of the discussion that took place at the conference devoted to his thought in 2004. There are only a few other articles on Ueda's thought published thus far in Japanese (including Davis 2017).[14] In Western languages, in addition to

[13]For a reminiscince of my meetings with Ueda Sensei, especially during the last year of his life, see Davis 2020.

several book chapters and journal articles (Bouso 2012, 2016; Davis 2008, 2013, 2019b; Döll 2011, 2020; Heisig 2005; Kopf 2015; Krummel 2019; Kuwayama 2021; Müller 2015; Nagel 1998; Vianello 2008), there exists just one monograph in German (Döll 2005) and one anthology in English that is soon to appear (Müller, Bouso, and Loughnane forthcoming). The present special issue of *Comparative and Continental Philosophy* is thus the first collection of articles on Ueda's thought to appear in a Western language.

The essays gathered in this special issue are intended to give the reader a gateway into, and a fairly comprehensive sense of, the main veins of Ueda's thought. The first essay is Gregory Moss's translation of the culminating chapter of Ueda's first book, the chapter he added to his German dissertation in which he compares, for the first time, Meister Eckhart's Mysticism and Zen Buddhism (Ueda 2018, 183–212). The final essay in this special issue is a review by Jason M. Wirth of the last book Ueda published, *Wer und was bin ich? Zur Phänomenologie des Selbst im Zen-Buddhismus* (Ueda 2011a; see also Davis 2013), a curated selection of articles he wrote in German over the years.

Ueda stressed how important it was for him to write, lecture, and engage in dialogue in German as well as in his native Japanese. Going back and forth between these two languages—while discussing the different cultural, historical, philosophical, and religious worlds in which those languages are embedded—both forced and enabled him to dig down deeper into the wellsprings of human existence from which they both arise (see Ueda 2001–2003, 4:388; Ueda 2001–2003, 5:352–354).

The middle three essays in this issue—those by John W. M. Krummel, myself, and John C. Maraldo—draw on Ueda's writings in both Japanese and German to elucidate and discuss many of his core ideas sketched in this introductory essay. Together, they present a fuller picture of what it meant for Ueda to lead a Zen life of dialogue in a twofold world.

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[14]It may come as a surprise that, aside from book reviews, to date only a few scholarly articles have been published on Ueda's thought in Japanese. Yet it is less common in Japan to engage in scholarship about living philosophers, and I suspect that, with his passing in 2019, in the coming years Ueda's thought will increasingly become the object of scholarship in Japan as well as abroad.

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